

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan 10-Year Update

Transcript of Public Comments from Environment Element Workshop

April 26, 2004

1. What is the Precautionary Principle?

- “Better safe than sorry” approach to policy making. If harm may occur from an action look at alternatives and take precautionary approach.
- San Francisco has adopted the Precautionary Principle
- When there's doubt take precautionary approach. i.e. Lead, mercury
- The idea behind proposing the precautionary principle is to tie the Comp Plan to Human Health
- A good example of the precautionary principal at work is in drug approval – pharmaceutical companies must show efficacy and safety

2. Environmental Element is broader than human health. How would precautionary Principle be integrated? How would it work with SEPA?

- The Goal of the Precautionary Principle is to provide an approach to decision-making and make decisions-making broader and more public and more creative.
- Don't be afraid of the lawyers
- There is a white paper on the precautionary principle available at <http://www.iceh.org/Pages/PPWhitePaperFinal.pdf>
- Best available science moves in right direction but reaction to uncertainty is different.
- Difficult to apply in project specific decision making processes. SEPA, Aquatic Environments can be used as a means to ask broad questions that needs to be asked.
- SEPA would benefit from having precautionary principle in place if 1st step before EIS.
- San Francisco approach to Precautionary Principal says “choose least harmful action” rather than “don't act”

3. Develop a series of scenarios of how Precautionary Principle would be applied in different decision-making processes.

4. As a broad statement, good approach.

5. Words "Precautionary Principle" don't show up in draft of Comprehensive Plan amendments.

- Policy E10 offers summary language consistent with Precautionary Principle.
- Outcomes that you expect need to be explicit.

6. Seattle is currently one of the few cities in attainment for clean air standards. In attainment areas there fewer tools to reduce impact of cars on air quality. This reduces incentives to go farther in reducing air pollution.

- Incentive to stay out of regulatory regime is high.

8. Environmental Element is less targeted than other elements. Sustainability indicators would help.

- Human health scorecard would help.
- Don't see ability to sue on projects with aggregate impacts on air quality. Be more prescriptive on no net impacts
- Indicators can provide a way to look at these issues.
- Does the Transportation Element consider cruise ship emissions on air quality? Indicators can help to consider issue.
- How are current indicators available?
- Lifespan, diabetes, forested areas, permeable surfaces would be added through Cascadia scorecard indicators.

9. Air quality may be appropriate to regulate at regional level.

10. How do we consider air quality and our aggregate contribution?

11. Adding in human health would benefit the Urban Village element.

12. Nuisance issues should be somewhere other than in environment element. Reframe as related to human health.

13. Concerned about the relationship between public and private responsibility for environmental improvements in the draft amendments.

14. Page 1- strike-out shouldn't be removed. Details about city taking responsibility about its environmental activity in E-3 should be added.

15. What's appropriate in the Comprehensive Plan and what's appropriate in other places is important. Balance between specific and detailed is being dealt with across state.
16. Seattle's basic approach to development fails in comparison to other jurisdictions. Cowlitz, Jefferson counties, Olympia good examples.
17. Public projects – City tries hard to get appeals turned away, doesn't take precautionary approach. Hearing Examiner strikes out evidence.
18. Policy E-3 could be used to require sensitive landscape design.
19. Where do shoreline issues stand?
 - Update in 2009
20. Environmentally Critical areas policies:
 - Glad to see acknowledgement of differences between resource areas and hazards
 - Policies are good – reflect concerns.
21. Rename the element the Environment and Human Health Element.